

PART VII.

Farm Marketing and Level of Living

Location for Marketing

The farmers of King County enjoy one of the best geographic locations in the state for marketing agricultural products. The area is approximately in the center of the western half of the state in the middle portion of Puget Sound. The county itself and the City of Seattle have an estimated 1955 population of 773,000, the largest market in the state. Within a radius of 75 miles from the central point of King County there are about 1,150,000 people, one of the major food markets of the Pacific Coast.

Transportation

Transportation facilities for moving the farm products to the city markets are excellent. Close location to major transcontinental and coast-wise railroads and highways as well as to seaports make it possible for the farm production in King County to move in all directions to major, local, regional, national and overseas markets in Alaska and other Pacific Ocean areas.

Rail freight service is available by six railroads: Northern Pacific, Great Northern, Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, Seattle-Portland and Spokane, and Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific. Mainlines and branch lines of these railroads traverse all the important farming valleys and have numerous loading spurs in such localities as Auburn, Kent, Renton, Snoqualmie and Issaquah.

Good highways allow heavy use of motor trucks to move farm products to fresh markets and to processing plants. With a total of 2,486 miles of roads King County ranks second among Washington counties. It has 126 miles of hard-surfaced roads of concrete and asphalt materials. An additional 1,141 miles are of gravel. About 95 percent of the entire road system can be used year-round for trucking of crops, hay, livestock, poultry and forest products. Cross-state and transcontinental roads, U.S. 10 through Snoqualmie Pass, and U.S. 2 through Stevens Pass provide excellent access over the Cascades to markets in the Wenatchee, Yakima, and Columbia Basin areas, as well as to the central market areas in Seattle.

Air freight and sea-going ship services for certain farm specialties marketed in Alaska, Hawaii and the eastern United States are conveniently close. The major airport--The Seattle-Tacoma International Airport--is midway between the two large Puget Sound cities. Farmers exporting certain items such as flowers, eggs, poultry, and other specialties are near three good ports--Seattle, Tacoma and Everett.

Income, Value of Products Sold

Census of Agriculture data on the value of farm products sold show that gross income has been on a general uptrend in recent years. All King County farmers marketed \$11,878,291 worth of agricultural products in 1944, a year of

peak war-time demand, compared with \$17,735,289 in 1954. Since 1944 the gross annual sales have risen to about \$3,000,000 more per year. Sales vary considerably by farms according to Census figures for 1954. There were 156 farms in 1954 with sales over \$25,000 and 450 farms sold between \$10,000 and \$25,000 worth of farm products. There were 371 part-time and residential farms with sales of less than \$1,200. Nearly two-thirds of the farms enumerated in the Census were classified as non-commercial with little or no income reported from farm products.

Animal and animal products made up 68 percent of the total value of farm products sold in 1954. Dairy products such as wholemilk and butterfat sold from farms accounted for over one-third of the total farm income and poultry and poultry products for over one-fifth of the total. Field crops were secondary in the total farm income, being surpassed by horticultural specialties and vegetables. All crops sold made up about one-third of the commercial farm income.

King County farm income ranks high among Washington counties. It stands fourth in income received from sales of livestock and livestock products and fifteenth from all crops. In value of dairy products it is second, and in sales of poultry is first, ahead of Whatcom, Pierce and Lewis Counties.

Total Value of Farm Products Sold in 1954: \$17,735,289

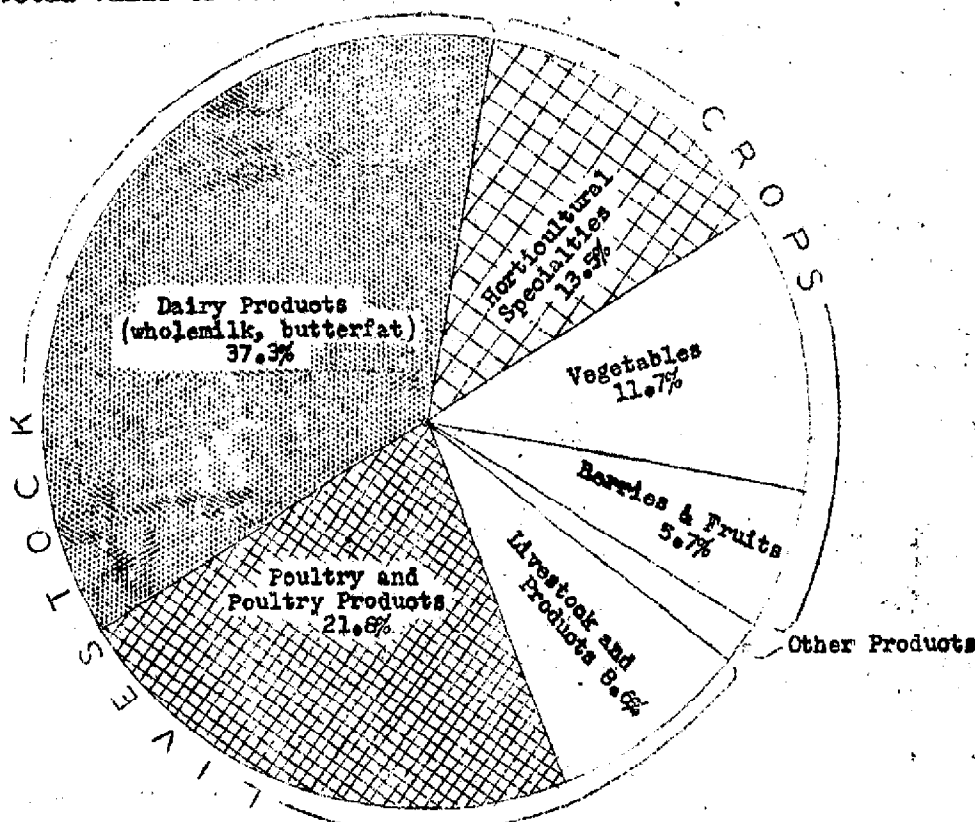


Figure 12.- Sources of Cash Income, Pierce County Farms, 1954.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture, 1954.

Marketing to Food Processors and Distributors

Most of the farm products are marketed in the immediate area to processors and distributors located in Seattle and its satellite cities. Cannery and frozen pack plants located in Auburn, Kent and Seattle handle a large volume of commercial crops. A large cannery of a national firm located in Kent processes green beans and other vegetables. There are three food canning plants, four freezing plants and nearly a dozen food specialty processor plants within the Seattle city limits. Food processing plants for making pickles, salad dressings, and preserves are located in Kent, Auburn, Seattle and Enumclaw. Plants which buy, pack, and ship horticultural specialties include florist wholesalers in Kent and Seattle, a mushroom packer in Lake City, and wholesalers of vegetables, berries, sour cherries and bulbs in other major King County cities.

Marketing of Dairy Products

In 1954, King County farmers marketed dairy, poultry, general livestock and products worth a total of \$12,014,745. The marketing of wholemilk and cream by dairy farmers accounted for one-half of these sales. The other one-half was made up of eggs, poultry and animals sold alive. Dairy men sold

Table 30.- Livestock and Livestock Products Marketed
King County, 1954.

Class of Livestock Products Sold	Quantity Marketed	Amount Received By Farmers
<u>Dairy Products</u>		
Whole milk-----	161,398,512 lbs.	\$ 6,579,263
Butterfat-----	58,084 lbs.	30,991
Total all dairy products		\$ 6,610,254
<u>Poultry and poultry products</u>		
Chickens-----	1,623,127 birds	\$ 1,235,024
Eggs-----	5,963,002 dozen	2,425,726
Turkeys, ducks, geese----		213,816
Total all poultry & poultry products		\$ 3,874,566
<u>Animals sold alive</u>		
Cattle-----	7,633 head	\$ 1,056,127
Calves-----	10,419 head	215,795
Hogs and pigs-----	5,387 head	204,168
Sheep and lambs-----	2,004 head	23,879
Horses and mules-----	156 head	19,953
Total all animals sold alive		\$ 1,519,922
<u>Other livestock and livestock products sold</u> -----		\$ 10,003
Total amount received for livestock and livestock products-----		\$12,014,745

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

161,398,500 pounds of wholemilk and 58,000 pounds of cream to distributors and processors. They received a total of \$6,610,254 in gross sales, second in the state to Whatcom County. The amount of \$6,579,263 for wholemilk was the largest single off-farm sales item in King County agriculture. Most of the milk is distributed in Seattle and other cities for fluid consumption. Milk is marketed under the Federal Milk Order regulating the Puget Sound, Washington, Milk Marketing Area. Because of the large population, King County dairymen cannot supply the entire demand of the immediate area. Fluid milk is brought in from most of the other Puget Sound counties to make up the milk deficit. Small milk processing plants for ice cream, cottage cheese and sour cream are located in Auburn and Seattle which absorb surpluses and other stocks which are not marketed fresh by producers and distributors.

Marketing Poultry and Eggs

King County poultrymen sold \$3,874,566 worth of eggs and chickens during 1954. The sale of eggs alone to distributors, retailers and food processors grossed \$2,425,766. A large cooperative, the Washington Co-op Farmers Association, with a plant at Auburn handles a large share of the eggs and dressed poultry which are marketed. The major outlet is the wholesale market in Seattle where 18 firms buy eggs from producers and then grade and wholesale them to retail outlets. A large city market for broilers and other fresh meat poultry has created a large industry in the slaughter and preparation of chickens, turkeys and ducks for wholesalers and retailers. Chicken and turkey farms which raise and sell dressed birds are located near Kent, Auburn, Issaquah and Seattle.

Marketing of Cattle, Hogs and Sheep

Because of the large consuming market in the greater Seattle area there is a concentration of meat packing facilities in western King County. King County farmers do not grow enough animals to fill the demand and livestock are transported from all over the state and even other states to meat packing plants at Auburn, Renton and Seattle. There are also a large number of rural businesses which sell locker beef and pork. The meat packing outlets for livestock include three plants at Renton, two at Auburn, one at Kent, Issaquah and Enumclaw. The Auburn Union Stockyard is a major market place for live animals. South Seattle is the major concentration where ten meat packing and processing factories are located. Livestock are received by truck from Puget Sound areas and other animals such as swine and sheep are brought by rail from as far as Montana and Iowa.

Marketing of Crops

According to the 1954 Census of Agriculture, farmers sold crops valued at \$5,536,000. This was slightly less than one-third of the total value of all products sold off farms. In farm value of crops, King County stood fifteenth in the state.

Horticultural specialties which include flowers, bulbs, plants, and shrubbery provide the largest source of income from crops. Growers and nurserymen sold about \$2,401,587 worth of these products in 1954, most of which were marketed directly from farms or nurseries to consumers and to florist wholesalers

or retailers in Seattle. There are six nursery and florist wholesale firms in the Auburn, Renton, Kent area. In Seattle, the major market area, there are eleven wholesale buyers of flowers and four nursery wholesalers.

Vegetables for processing and sale on fresh markets were second in importance. Sales were \$2,086,035 in 1954. In recent years increasing amounts of vegetables have been sold to canners and freezers who have located plants in the Green River and Puyallup River Valleys and in Seattle. King County leads the state in volume of canned green beans and sauerkraut. Kent is a center of food freezing; Auburn is a center of vegetable canning. Growers haul a large volume of fresh vegetables to wholesale markets in the center of Seattle, but a considerable amount is handled through roadside stands in the Green River Valley. A few growers operate stands in the Seattle Public Market.

Sour cherries, strawberries, raspberries and other fruits comprise another important crop worth over a million dollars per year. Sour cherries are canned by processors at Seattle, Kent and Puyallup. Strawberries, blueberries and raspberries are marketed fresh in Seattle and other Puget Sound cities. A smaller volume is sold to frozen food industries in Kent, Auburn, Seattle and Puyallup. Currants and strawberries on Vashon Island are nearly all packed by a plant located on the island.

Table 31.- Crops Marketed From King County Farms, 1954.

Type of Crop Sold	Amount Received By Farmers (Dollars)	Percent All Crops Sold
Berries, Cherries and other fruits	\$1,011,185	17.6
Horticultural Specialties (bulbs, flowers, plants)	2,401,587	42.2
Vegetables (green beans and other truck crops)	2,086,035	36.4
Forest Products (pulpwood, sawlogs, firewood, etc.)	184,493	3.2
Field Crops (hay and small grains)	37,244	.6
Total amount received by farmers for cash crops	\$5,720,544	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Marketing Farm Forest Products

Farm forest products are more and more important to King County farmers as a source of farm income. Though still a minor item in total farm product value, the forest crop is gaining in importance throughout western Washington. Total sales in 1954 were \$184,493 from 134 farms ranking King County tenth among the counties of the state and eighth among the counties of western Washington. Forest products consisted mainly of pulpwood, sawlogs, fence posts, firewood and Christmas trees. An expanding paper industry on Puget Sound has created

good markets for King County pulpwood at Everett and Tacoma. The big urban market at Seattle provides a good outlet for Christmas trees, firewood and forest greens from farm woodlots in the hills of eastern King County. A few farmers market fence posts, tree props and small poles to truckers who haul them over the Cascades to farms in the Yakima Valley and the Columbia Basin.

Table 32.- Forest Products on Farms, King County, 1954.

Type of Product	Farms Reporting	Quantity
Firewood and fuelwood cut-----	862	6,228 cords
Fence posts cut-----	268	34,989 posts
Sawlogs and veneer logs cut-----	111	4,253 M bd. ft.
Pulpwood cut-----	25	2,853 cords
Cascade bark * -----	--	12,000 lbs.
Christmas trees * -----	--	18,000 trees
Total value of firewood, fence posts, logs, lumber, pulpwood and other forest products sold-----	134	\$184,493

* No Census data on this item; figures represent estimates of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.

Agricultural Income Compared to Other Income Sources

Although King County is an important agricultural county, net income from farm operations makes up less than one percent of the total income received by

Table 33.- Types and Sources of Income 1950-1952, King County 1/

Type and Source of Income	Income in Dollars By Years (In thousands of dollars)			Percentage of County Income by Years		
	1950	1951	1952	1950	1951	1952
Agriculture	2/	2/	2/	2/	2/	2/
Construction	\$ 84,465	88,491	89,551	6.1	5.7	5.5
Government	147,541	172,369	189,971	10.6	11.1	11.6
Manufacturing	237,860	306,066	321,933	17.1	19.8	19.7
Service	163,055	177,223	194,311	11.7	11.5	11.9
Transportation						
Communication						
and Utilities	114,233	133,605	136,743	8.2	8.6	8.4
Trade	296,303	329,025	343,364	21.2	21.3	21.1
Miscellaneous	85,820	87,788	92,762	6.1	5.7	5.7
Property Income	156,544	165,742	173,558	11.2	10.7	10.6
Other Income	109,225	85,927	88,882	7.8	5.6	5.5
Total	\$1,395,046	\$1,546,236	\$1,631,075	100.0	100.0	100.0

1/ John A. Guthrie and Stanley E. Boyle, County Income Payments in Washington, 1950-1952. Pullman, Wash. Washington State College, Bulletin No. 26.

2/ Less than one-half of 1 percent, therefore included in miscellaneous.

its residents. Income from wages, salaries, rents and profits in non-agricultural occupations and industries was more than 100 times that from agricultural industries in 1952. Total income in the county was about \$1,368,635,000 in 1952 while income from agriculture was about \$10,000,000.

Specified Farm Expenditures

The costs and expenses of operating a farm reduce the final income a farmer receives as profits from sales of crops and livestock. In the Census of 1954, farmers of King County reported a total expense of \$12,000,000 for machine hire, labor, feed, gasoline, fertilizer and other materials. The major expense was \$7,035,000 which 4,282 farms spent for feed grains and hay. A second major expense was the \$3,770,000 which 1,671 farms spent for hired labor. Because of the large amount of hand labor required in commercial vegetable farming, King County led all other western Washington counties in this expense.

Table 34.- Specified Farm Expenditures in 1954, King County

Type of Expenditure	Number of Farms Reporting	Expenditure of All Farms	Average Per Farm
Machine hire.....	1,571	\$ 222,605	\$ 141.70
Hired labor	1,598	3,771,222	2,359.96
Feed for livestock and poultry	4,282	7,035,478	1,643.03
Gasoline, petroleum fuel & oil	2,928	601,322	205.37
Commercial fertilizer.....	1,168	311,114	266.39
Lime and liming materials.....	150	23,415	156.10
Total expended		\$11,965,196	

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Level of Living on King County Farms

On the whole, farm people have not enjoyed as high a level of living as city people. Farm incomes are lower on the average than urban incomes. Because of the isolated location of many farms, such conveniences as electricity, hot and cold running water and telephones have not been as easily available to farm families. This is the general situation in American agriculture.

In Washington State and in King County particularly, however, the farm population compares quite favorably with other population groups in conveniences of modern living. The standard of living on King County farms is above average. The farm family level-of-living index for the United States was 122 in 1950. With an index of 154, Washington ranked eleventh among the states.

The farm family level-of-living index for King County in 1950 was 156, slightly above the state, but considerably above the national average. Farm families of King County have more comforts and conveniences such as electric washing machines, refrigerators, telephones, inside plumbing and central heating. The quality of farm housing is better and the isolation less than in most American counties.

Table 35.- Indices of Level of Living of King County Farm Families, 1950 Compared with State and National Averages.

Index Items	Percentage of total farm families with listed index items		
	United States	Washington	King County
Farm Family Level-of-living	122	154	153
Median Income per Family	\$1,567	\$2,380	\$2,765
Electricity	78.3%	92.5%	97.1%
Electric Hot Water Heater	17.4%	49.1%	55.5%
Electric Washing Machine	58.7%	85.4%	89.2%
Home Freezers	12.1%	14.5%	14.1%
Mech. Refrigerators	62.7%	77.4%	78.2%
Telephone	38.2%	57.5%	64.4%
Hot and Cold Water Plumbing	23.8%	70.4%	79.2%
Central Heating	18.1%	17.8%	27.0%
Houses with More than One Person per Room	22.3%	15.7%	14.5%
Automobiles	63.0%	77.6%	79.1%
Travel 10 Miles or More to Trading Center	21.4%	20.5%	7.2%

Source: Walter L. Slocum and Carol L. Stone, The Farm People of Washington at Mid-Century.

As history and statistics presented in these pages have shown, King County agriculture is a record of progress by its industrious people. In less than a century those who have chosen to live on the soil have made it an important farming county. Its numerous dairy, poultry, vegetable, berry and horticultural specialty farms add much to the economic well-being of the area. Many part-time farms provide a secure and wholesome way of life for industrial workers. Each farm stands as a living monument to the spirit of enterprise and progress and religious faith of the many and varied agriculturists choosing their homes in the King County countryside.